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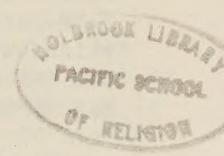
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BEHEIREN: A UNIQUELY JAPANESE PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

by John Nakajima

In order for peoples' movements around the world to be truly "people's" movements, they have to arise out of the people of specific country, region or continent. No one form of people's movement can be exported to or imported from people whose background is entirely different. Thus Frelimo is an African movement, liberation education a Latin American emphasis, and the Alinsky method of community organization is very American. It is also true, however, that the study of other types of movements not only enriches one's own strategies but creates solidarity and mutual encouragement between the movements.

Beheiren (the Japan "Peace for Vietnam" Committee) has been typically and uniquely a Japanese form of people's movement. Since 1965 it has acquired a fame among concerned peoples around the world. The following report on Beheiren is intended not only as an objective appreciation of a Japanese people's movement but also as a challenge to Christians who are committed to participate in God's mission among the people.

In February, 1965, the U. S. began massive aerial attacks on North Vietnam. Many Japanese citizens were frustrated both by the Japanese government support of the attack and by the inactivity of "professional" protesters such as labor unions, political parties and student bodies. Several cultural figures (writers, composers, playwrights, philosophers and film directors), who hitherto had been critical but inactive, planned a street demonstration on April 24. It attracted about 1,000 non-partisan, unaffiliated individual citizens.

Encouraged by this unexpected support, a second demonstration was planned, and the third, fourth. . . the hundredth and the last on October 6, 1973. The group took no effort to make a constitution or rules, to recruit members, to elect officers to take votes, to collect fees or to establish offices. The only requirement was agreement on three basic slogans: "Peace for Vietnam"; "Vietnam for the Vietnamese"; and "Opposition to the Japanese Government's Cooperation with the U.S. in the Vietnam War." Everything else was largely up to the individual or local citizen's initiatives.

Eight years of activity included the following: Demonstrations, such as the one in Tokyo in 1969 which attracted 75,000 persons; a 24-hour televised Teach-In about the Vietnam War in 1965; one-page anti-war advertisements in the *New York Times* (1965) and in the *Washington Post* (1966), funded by thousands of small donations by Japanese people; international conferences such as the Japan-U.S.

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* * * * * Peoples' Treaty Against War and for Peace (1966); assistance for at least 20 U.S. military deserters and hundreds of conscientious objectors; the promotion of anti-war sentiment among U.S. servicemen through leafletting outside U.S. bases in Japan; the support of resisters within the Self-Defense Forces of Japan; the attempt to obstruct Mitsubishi Heavy Industries which is heavily involved in armament production, by securing stock and attending the MHI meetings; and the publication of Beheiren News (a monthly in Japanese) and AMPO (a quarterly in English).

Partly because of the alleged ceasefire agreement in Vietnam but mainly because its leaders feel that time must be used for the further development of the movement, Beheiren will dissolve itself in January.

The consciousness of Beheiren's leaders, nourished through their experiences, directs them now to enlarge their scope and to grapple with the many serious issues in all Asian countries. Together with Asia Environment Society and the Protestant-Catholic Joint Committee of SODEPAX (Society, Development and Peace), the leaders are planning a "Conference of Asians on Economic Development and the Environment" next summer.

-- A Unique Organization --

The so-called chairman, Makoto Oda, and the so-called secretary-general, Yuichi Yoshikawa are so called just for the benefit of the outsiders. When they have to get permission for demonstration or to rent a hall for their meeting they are required to name a representative. Hence out of the necessity Oda's name began to be used most often. Yoshikawa was the oldest (now 42) among persons who come frequently to their shabby, rented two-room meeting place. Therefore he was named secretary general.

In 1968, when the U.S. aircraft carrier *Enterprise* came to Sasebo port in Kyushu, Oda and Yoshikawa tried in vain to hire an airplane to drop leaflets to the GIs. Failing this, they circled the 70,000-ton carrier in a three-ton boat reading their message by loud speaker. When the two men landed, they made a big sign saying "Let's join in walking to protest the U.S. military presence". One hour later, they found about 300 citizens following them. At the time of departure, this spontaneous group decided to form Sasebo Beheiren.

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NOTES TO EDITORS AND READERS:

1) Publication or any use of JCAN articles in any of the media is welcomed without advance notice and without payment. The only condition is that full credit be given to *Japan Christian Activity News*, preferably with the addition "published by the National Christian Council of Japan".

2) Opinions expressed in unsigned articles represent the thinking of one or more of the JCAN editors and are not necessarily official positions of the NCC. Opinions expressed in signed articles are primarily the author's. Bylines on major articles also represent credit where credit is due.

3) The final three issues for 1973 will be mailed on November 30, December 7 and December 21. The December 21 issue will include an index to all articles published in 1973.

Local Beheiren groups were formed in this and many other ways. Since there was no regulation on starting a Beheiren group and no rule for them to report to anybody, not even Yoshikawa knows how many such groups existed. He says at least 300 at the peak.

Beheiren has never employed either full-time or part-time staff. Nobody gets paid, but the Tokyo office is full of volunteers every day. On the average, about 20 students and workers come daily.

-- "All Men Sinned" --

Asked what Beheiren's principles are in leading people, Yoshikawa said: "No principle is our principle. We only avoid using the term "absolutely". We are aware that, as human beings, nothing is absolute. Oda often advocates what he calls "*Ningen chobo-chobo setsu*" (Everybody so-and-so-theory). No human being is better in quality than the others. Everybody, from the Prime Minister to a slum dweller, is sometimes good and sometimes bad. Our movement is based on this recognition.

Oda himself writes in this way: "If you are a human being existing in this society, it means that you have to be--out of necessity you are--a kind of accomplice to any crimes which the society is committing....So we are quite rigid about ourselves, but at the same time we have a kind of tolerance about what others are doing. This kind of tolerance is another of the characteristics of Beheiren. And one of the defects of radical movements all over the world is that such movements lack tolerance...So that one of the main principles of Beheiren is that we do not want to make a criticism without our own *doing*...When you want to do something, you have to do it, and without making any stupid complaints about what others are doing."

The principles of "individual responsibility" and "tolerance" seem to be the backbone of Beheiren movement. It is a skillful yet unintentional combination of traditional Japanese sentiment and the spirit of modern democracy which is alien to Japanese tradition. Tolerance toward foreign religions or ideologies has been a characteristic of the Japanese mind. But the emphasis on the individual responsibility in decision-making is quite foreign to the Japanese, who is noted for finding security only in the group he belongs to. The fact that Beheiren has been successful in recruiting hundreds of thousands young people committed to this principle shows a blink of hopeful light for the future.

-- Internationality --

Unlike most other movements in Japan, Beheiren has a mature international sense. Many of its leaders speak fluent English and some speak French or German. Since its beginning, it has had many contacts with activists of other countries. Steven Smeil of the Vietnam Day Committee, Howard Zinn of Boston University, Ralph Featherstone of SNCC, A. J. Muste of CNUA, Dave Delinger, David MacReynolds and Carl Oglesby of SDS, Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Jane Fonda are among the people who were invited by Beheiren to exchange ideas and to assist in development of mutual strategies.

Beheiren leaders have travelled extensively throughout the world and established many solid relationships. Yet they never lose the Japanese identity. Their internationality enriches their Japanese identity. They have never been criticized because of their knowledge about the world. They are always communicable to the grass-roots Japanese. This quality fostered the remarkable combination of Japanese mentality and the spirit of modern democracy mentioned above.

Oda reflects upon the movement as it began right after the 1964 Tokyo Olympic games: "At that time we were still operating on the idea, left over from the old peace movement, that we never again wanted to be victims. But in the process of the movement itself we began to realize that we felt our position to be different from that of the old peace movement. We began to realize that the Japanese state had become powerful enough to be in the position of the oppressor. As this became increasingly clear, we began to think about the actual basis of the

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* * * * * peace movement. We saw that we had to fundamentally re-examine the basis of the movement." He goes on to say that one of the important motives for his commitment to the movement is that he recognizes himself as an actual and possible assailant in war. This is only one example of how Beheiren leaders have the ability to discern accurately the signs of the time. Because of this, they are being asked by many major publications to write about their findings and thinkings. They themselves write book after book which often become best-sellers. Many people who do not participate in actual demonstrations are influenced by reading their books.

-- Counter Institutionalism --

Yoshikawa explains one of the major reasons for dissolving Beheiren: "Our type of movement must be based strictly upon the principle that each individual participate responsibly. Once you get institutionalized, you are dead as a movement. There is always a danger of a few elite leaders monopolizing the power. In our movement, information becomes the power. We in Tokyo cannot escape from having more information than the others. Those who have more information tend to be looked up by those who have not. Then the power inevitably tends to be assimilated into the hands of the former. This is the beginning of institutionalism. We don't want to be trapped into this situation. This is why we are dissolving."

In other words, they are trying to avoid the steps the early church trod. Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Jerusalem all acquired their status in the early church by the same kind of process as Yoshikawa describes. But was it not because of the creation of those centers that the church grew? Was it at the cost of denying people's responsible participation? Be it as it may, Beheiren's example is instructive for people's movement in the last quarter of the 20th century.

-- Criticisms --

Many criticisms have been directed toward Beheiren. From the government and the establishment side, it was natural that Beheiren received not only severe criticism but also all kinds of disruption. The power structure could not understand the new spirit emerging from this new type of Japanese. To them Beheiren was just another radical group.

For that matter, the mass media have not understood the movement well either. They often identified it with violent activists. Intentionally or unintentionally, they often misreported Beheiren's activities, leading readers to believe that Beheiren was a dangerous group bringing disorder to the society.

Beheiren was also attacked by the radical left for its 'lukewarmness'. At one of the big rallies held in Kyoto in 1968, the Beheiren leaders proposed and started to sing "We shall overcome" at the close of the meeting. It was overruled de facto by the outbursts of radicals singing the "Internationale". The fact that the leaders were not aggravated might have made the radicals more frustrated.

More serious criticism comes from the Beheiren leaders themselves. The movement was never successful in rural communities. It was restricted more to urban intellectuals. Despite the comfortable thought that, after all, a good portion of the Japanese population now is urban intellectual, still the fact remains that unless one can plant the new type of thinking among rural communities, the movement will never become universal.

Another question may be in order: Should this movement forever remain anti-establishment? None of the Beheiren leaders seem to be interested in running for political office themselves. Nor are they interested positively in supporting any of the candidates. Perhaps it is the discipline they impose upon themselves. They may be hopeful that, by creating a desirable atmosphere, someone will direct the nation's policy accordingly. But who is this someone? The day may come when the movement has to think seriously of training this "someone-to-be", in order to counter concretely what they think is politically evil.

When asked for his evaluation of Beheiren over the past eight years, secretary-general Yoshikawa answered, "It was fun."

This week, for the second week in a row, *The Life of Christ*, by Shusaku Endo, is the number one best-selling book in Japan. Because such a Christian title is extremely rare in the top 100 books, let alone in the top 10, JCAN asked Takaaki Aikawa, Chairman of the NCC, to comment on the book and its popularity.

In order to understand why *The Life of Christ* became the top best seller in Japan, Endo's previous popular works such as *Silence* or *By the Dead Sea* must be taken into consideration. Many Japanese had wanted to see the author's original portrait of Christ, and many were anxious to have his comments on dubious questions, raised in his former works, as to the divinity of his picture of Christ. *The Life of Christ* is a well written, very concise and very vivid answer, though it lacks the poetry of Papini and the depth of Renan.

The first strong point of this book is that the materials used in the story are quite well-researched. The author made careful studies of historians and theologians including Flavius Josephus, Gunther Bornkamm and Rudolf Bultmann. He relies strongly on Biblical specialists. The second merit of this book is Endo's skill as a novelist, especially his intuitive analyses of the psychology and strategies of the great political and religious leaders of that day. It is very interesting to see Pilate, Herod and Caiaphas make puppet dances on the palm of the author.

The third attraction of this book --and its essential merit-- is Endo's oriental approach to God already indicated in his former two books. One must not try to find the image of the Son of God in the lines with which he paints. Rather one must find God's image in the blank spaces of his paintings. This is the way to appreciate *sumie* (Indian ink picture), an approach we call "self-contradictory identification."

A last but not least, one of the reasons why Japanese like Endo's Christ may be that they no longer want to see miracles. Out of the desperation of the post-war days, too many miracles were born and too many have died.

RESOURCES CENTER OPENS IN TOKYO



In 1968 a group of Japanese men and women felt the strong need to inform the English-speaking world about the actions and goals of numerous citizen's groups in Japan. They began a publication called "AMPO, A Report From the Japanese New Left" which focussed on struggles by students and workers for peace and justice in Asia and at home.

Unlike most movement publications, AMPO has steadily expanded over the years in terms of circulation, news coverage and staff. Issue No. 18, just off the press, reflects this growth and change with a new 66-page format, a new subtitle ("A Report on the Japanese People's Movements"), new concerns (such as the plight of Japanese women) and a new office which has expanded into an invaluable resources center.

The Pacific-Asia Resources Center (PARC), opened in September, makes available more than 200 periodicals and other current materials on the economic, political, military and cultural facets of U.S.-Japan activities in Asia and globally. The collection is the most comprehensive available in Japan on movement and revolutionary activities around the world.

PARC also features specialized business and government publications and a newspaper clipping service. Each month PARC publishes an "Info-Index Service", an annotated bibliography of recent additions to its collection. Through the PARC copying service, all materials in the collection are made available on request to researchers in Japan and abroad. In addition, PARC is cooperating in numerous research projects including a current study on the "cooperation and

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* * * * * contradictions" between Pacific imperialist powers.

The PARC office is located in central Tokyo. Inquiries about membership, or about the full range of services available, are welcomed by telephone (03-585-3259) or by writing: AMPO/PARC, P.O. Box 5250, Tokyo International 100-31, Japan.

PARC's 24-member Board of Directors includes Makoto Oda, one of the founders of *Beheiren*; Ichiyo Muto, one of the founders of AMPO; John Nakajima, General Secretary of the NCC; and Jun Ui, one of the leaders in the growing anti-pollution struggles.

In October, PARC inaugurated a weekly news service, "New Asia News" (NAN), to provide more immediate and wider dissemination of news than was possible through AMPO (published quarterly). The first releases have already been used widely by movement publications in the U.S. NAN editors include Akio Yamakawa, an international affairs expert, and Jim Stentzel, a missionary-journalist.

In addition to these services, PARC provides space and resources for AMPO and for *Rentai* (a Japanese-language publication on liberation movements).

The current issue of AMPO features three articles on the Japanese right-wing, a 17-page report on the kidnapping in Tokyo of South Korean opposition leader Kim Daé Jüng, and two special reports on pollution. The issue (¥350) may be ordered from the above address. A one-year subscription costs ¥1,000 in Japan and \$6 overseas.

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AUTHOR OF HIROSHIMA BOOK HONORED

Fifty persons gathered at the Hiroshima YMCA on October 6 to honor Hitoshi Takayama, editor of the recently published book *Hiroshima in Memoriam and Today*.

Takayama explained that he was moved to write a book in English about Hiroshima when, as a patient in the A-Bomb Hospital and through a friend who was curator of the A-Bomb Museum, he discovered many foreign visitors whose eyes were opened for the first time. He became determined to share the experience of August, 1945 -- and the still present effects -- with those who cannot witness the horror first-hand in Hiroshima.

The 238-page book is Takayama's second on the subject and includes expressions about Hiroshima from persons around the world. [The book may be ordered through Takayama: 2565 Furakoshi-cho, Aki-gun, Hiroshima 736. Please enclose ¥800 or \$4 per copy, including postage.]

The honored guest was commended by Dr. Tomin Harada, who has brought young Vietnamese war victims to Hiroshima for treatment. Mary McMillan, a Kyodan missionary in Hiroshima, toasted Takayama and expressed appreciation for the fact that the book was in English. She also noted the continuing need to make known in Japan the ongoing suffering of the atomic bomb survivors, and the continuing need for all to pray and work for peace.

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